



Dennis Patterson Photo

Smoke bellows from a 500-acre, arson blaze in Wasatch County Thursday.

Officials probe Wasatch blaze started by arsonists Thursday

10-1 & 10-2-87
By SONNI SCHWINN
Wasatch County Correspondent

An arsonist burned about 500 acres of private property Thursday by starting several brush fires about 4 miles east of Heber City, according to Wasatch County Sheriff's Deputy Jed Olson.

The Sheriff's office reported that the fires apparently started in two different spots and a third fire was set after firefighters arrived to battle the first blazes. Because of the manner in which the fires started, officials say arson

is the probable cause but there is no suspect in the case yet.

Olson said about 30 state fire wardens, Forest Service and Wasatch County Public Works employees responded when the fires were reported at 8:30 a.m. They were reported under control by Thursday night and crews are watching for hot spots today.

The nearest structures to the fires were summer homes in the Timberlakes development, about two miles away.



PHOTOGRAPHY/ RAY GRASS

Grooming the trail

Snowmobilers will be able to travel twice as far in the Uintas now. Saturday, the Utah Division of Parks and Recreation introduced a new LMC 3700 snow groomer to its fleet. The almost-new groomer, picked up as a demonstrator at a substantially reduced price — \$96,000 instead of the \$150,000 regular price tag — will groom 116 miles of trails

on a weekly basis with trailheads at Soap Stone, Lake Creek, Bear River and Woodland. The old groomer, retired after 13 years on the trails and numerous breakdowns, was only able to groom 60 miles. This is the second groomer the DPR has bought under a gas tax allocation passed by the Legislature last year.

Seatbelts Prevent Serious Injuries in Rollover

One woman received only minor injuries and another escaped without injuries because they were wearing seatbelts when their vehicle overturned on Lake Creek Road about five miles east of Heber City, Aug. 18 about noon.

Wasatch County Sheriff Edd Thacker said Tammy Murdock, Salt Lake City, was driving the vehicle and lost control when she reached for a cassette tape and the car overturned. A passenger, Margaret Murdock, Salt Lake City, was taken to Wasatch County Hospital to be treated for minor injuries.

8-22-90



(Center) Once again an abundance of firefighters from several local agencies showed up at a brush fire in Lake Creek last week to put it out as quickly as possible and prevent its spread into a major wildfire. *NW 1990*

Wasatch, state officials investigate waste in Lake Creek

By SONNI SCHWINN
Herald Correspondent

HEBER CITY — The apparent discharge of dairy animal waste into Lake Creek, which empties into Deer Creek Reservoir, is being investigated by Wasatch County and Utah State authorities.

Formal charges have not been filed, but Ray Loveless, Mountainland Area Water Quality Director, said, "There is a definite violation" of State Code, after inspecting the creek above 1200 East last Friday morning. He said he is not involved

with enforcement, but that he would report the evidence he had observed to Department of Health officials. He said he didn't know how they would respond.

Loveless was accompanied on the inspection by County Commissioner Moroni Besendorfer and Bob Mathis, county planner, who has referred the matter to the county attorney.

The inspection was conducted in response to neighbors who say they have complained about the conditions to state and local health

authorities for some five years. They claim that rather than using equipment that was purchased with federal funds in order to safely dispose of the waste from the dairy operation, the material allegedly is drained onto a field and runs downhill directly into the stream.

In response to a citizen's complaint, Don A. Ostler, executive secretary of the Utah Water Pollution Control Committee for the State Department of Health, wrote a letter dated Dec. 14, 1988, to the farmer suspected of causing the

pollution. The letter warned that permitting contents from the dairy's liquid waste pond to drain or discharge into Lake Creek are in direct violation of the law. According to the letter, violators may be subject to up to \$10,000 per day penalty per violation and up to \$25,000 per day penalty per violation for willful violations.

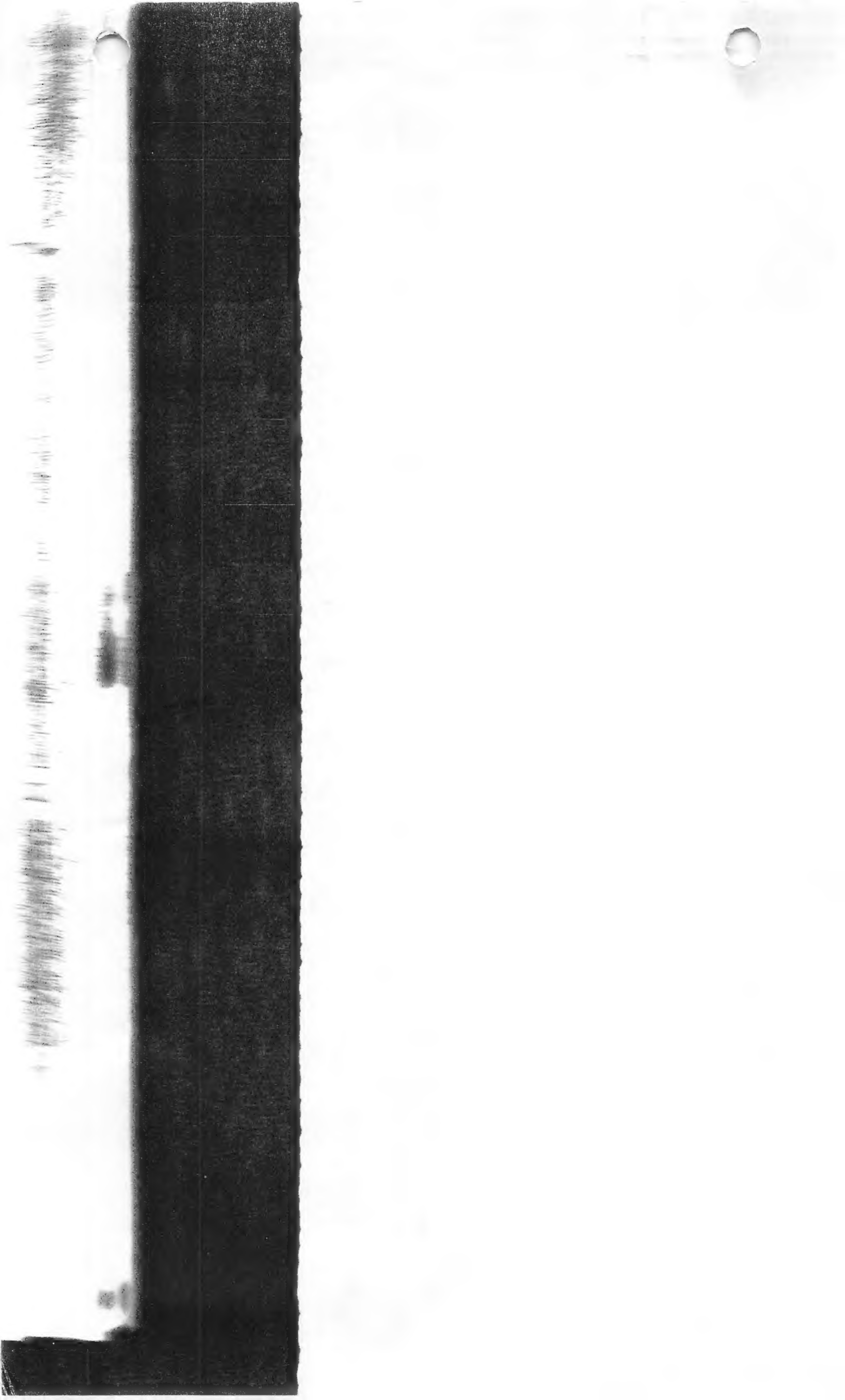
Ostler notified the suspect that the waste pond would be inspected for evidence related to such charges. "It is our understanding that all

the required equipment has been purchased and delivered to complete the liquid phase of the project and that implementation should occur as soon as possible."

Loveless said the equipment referred to, cost the federal government "quite a lot of money," but he didn't know the exact amount. He said the dairy's winter storage holding pond for the waste was not large enough for the operation, which neighbors estimate at about 200 dairy cows.

"So we entered into a contract with them to provide them with some equipment to help them deal with the problems they were having," Loveless said.

He said 75 percent of the cost was funded by an Environmental Protection Agency Clean Lakes grant administered through the State Health Department Bureau of Water Pollution Control. He said the complete system was installed and ready for use no later than summer of 1989.



Timber Lakes project awaiting Wasatch County Commission approval

By SONNI SCHWINN
Herald Correspondent

HEBER CITY — The Wasatch County Commission won't make a decision for at least two weeks on whether or not to approve a proposed Timber Lakes special service district for road maintenance.

Two Timber Lakes property owners opposed the district during a public hearing Monday, and Commission Chairman Moroni Besendorfer read a letter that also opposed the district.

One complaint was that people whose primary residences are outside of the county didn't know about the hearing. The commission postponed the decision to allow time for more people to express their opinions.

Steve Hansen, county attorney, said if half of the qualified voters of the territory (the proposed district area) or the owners of more than 50 percent of the taxable property in the territory, based on property value, object to the dis-

trict, the district can't be established.

The petition to form the district, which was presented to the commission by the property owners association, required the signatures of only 10 percent of the property owners.

The roads in the development are private, with a locked gate at the entrance, so the county is not responsible for maintaining them. The special service district would be able to charge the property owners an annual fee which would be used to pay either the county or a private contractor for road work, like snow plowing and surface repairs.

James Thomas, who owns four lots but only one dwelling in the development, objected to the proposal. He said the district would charge him for each lot, which would be unfair because he wouldn't receive any more benefits than those who own only one. He said he felt he was being forced

out of the area and that a number of others who own more than one lot felt the same.

He was concerned that contracting with the county would mean the roads would have to become public, the gate left unlocked, and that the county would eventually insist on black-topping the roads. He objected that only five or six permanent residents of the development could get the district formed and accused them of trying to get full-time maintenance subsidized by the part-time residents.

He said each of the out-of-county part-time residents should have been notified of the hearing by cer-

tified mail.

Earl Thomas also spoke against the district. He was concerned that the only ones in the district with full voting power would be voters registered in the county, which would only be 10 to 15 of the approximately 1,500 property owners. Most of the dwellings are secondary residences and the owners must vote in the districts in which their primary homes are located.

He asked the commission to set up the district so that all property owners would have a vote.

Bud Breeze, vice president of the homeowners association, said no one had ever suggested remov-

ing the locked gate and that the sheriff's office and the public works departments have keys for when they need access.

Besendorfer said the roads would remain private, and that the county could not black-top the roads or do any other work except as directed and contracted by the district.

Hansen said state law allows everyone in a special service district to vote on district matters, whether they are registered voters in the local precinct or not. In any case, he said districts are strictly governed by state laws which the county commission does not have

the power to change. he also said notification of the hearing was proper and legal.

Breeze said the proposal to form the district was presented to the homeowners during their annual July meeting. He said the board of directors voted on the proposal three times and passed it unanimously. He said if the homeowners would attend the annual meetings, they would know what is going on and that certified letters shouldn't have to be sent out every time the board makes a decision, because the board was elected to improve the development.

Neighbors Protest Lake Creek Development

8-10-77-92

Some Lake Creek residents objected to a proposal to build a subdivision in Lake Creek during last Thursday's Wasatch County Planning Commission, claiming there isn't enough water, the sewage system could damage the water table, and the additional traffic it would generate on Lake Creek Rd. would be hazardous.

The subdivision would be located on Lake Creek Rd., about 4.5 miles east of Heber City. The developer, Brent Hill, who also is developing the Valley Hills subdivision, is proposing to develop 43 one-acre lots plus open spaces, with septic tank and drain fields, culinary water provided by a well, and a separate irrigation system. He is asking the county to rezone the area from RF-1 (recreational and forestry) to RA-3 (residential and agriculture), to allow the subdivision.

Although the zoning matter was on the commission's agenda, Bob Mathis, county planner, said he had not received all the information he needed in time to be prepared to present a report, or make a recommendation. Since people had come

to the meeting prepared to discuss the issues, the commission did not remove the item from the agenda, and allowed them to present their objections. Rezoning the area will be discussed at the July 2 meeting of the planning commission.

One of the neighbors, Mike Lortz, argued that four wells in the area have gone dry during the past three years and the aquifer could not support the additional 58,600 gallons of water required by the subdivision. He noted that the development would nearly quadruple the traffic on Lake Creek Rd., to a total of about 585 trips per day, which would require the road to be improved.

Other neighbors echoed his concerns. They said the accident rate on the road already is high, and would increase with the additional traffic. They also said they had chosen to live in the area because of the open, rural atmosphere, and had right to expect it to be protected because of the zoning. They said it wouldn't be fair to change the zoning to permit more dense development.

Steve Sowby, project engineer, explained engineering and environmental studies that show the proposed water and sewer systems are feasible, without depleting or contaminating the aquifer. Hill explained the water system only has to have the capacity to provide 58,600 gallons of water per day in case of fire.

County Officials Worried About Fire Dangers in Timber Lakes

7-29-92
by Sonni Schwinn

County officials plan to meet today with the Timber Lakes developer, Veigh Cummings, to make sure subdivision residents and visitors have escape routes in case of fire.

The county used to make concessions for mountain subdivisions, allowing them to build roads a little narrower, steeper, and winding than codes called for, and didn't enforce requirements for at least two access roads. But county officials have stopped being lenient since the tragic Wasatch Mountain fire two years ago, in which two firefighters were killed and 18 mountain homes were destroyed.

That fire proved the importance of roads built so that large emergency vehicles can easily maneuver on them. Although everyone was

safely evicted from the fire area, many more lives could have been lost if the fire had blocked the only access road into the Oak Haven subdivision. Since then, Oak Haven homeowners have tried to get an easement across Wasatch Mountain State Park property for an emergency road, but the park director won't allow it, according to Commissioner Pete Coleman.

Several problems at the Timber Lakes recreational subdivision worry county officials, especially because spring moisture caused an abundance of vegetation to grow that has now become tinder dry, and could easily be ignited into an even greater tragedy than the Wasatch Mountain fire.

When completed, there will be about 2,000 lots in the subdivision, according to Robert McDon-

ald, county building inspector. There are several emergency escape routes out of the area with crash gates blocking them where they enter private property.

But representatives of the homeowners association reported several weeks ago that Cummings had installed heavy, locked gates behind the crash gates on the property line between the subdivision and his private land. McDonald said Cummings claims he had to do something to protect his property and livestock from trespassers, especially RVs. However, in case of fire, Timber Lakes residents would be trapped.

Another problem is with a road Cummings must finish by September, which he wants to build only 21 feet wide, rather than 26 feet wide as required by county

code. Although the commissioners and planning department have made it clear they will not compromise on the requirement.

County Attorney Steve Hansen said he had questions about the county's jurisdiction on Cummings property, and whether or not the county could force him to leave his gates unlocked. He said the county definitely can keep people from locking the gates on the public roads in the subdivision. He said escape routes across private property might be included in the development's covenants, which the county could enforce.

Even with wide roads and several emergency exit roads, Deputy County Attorney Dan Matthews said people could be trapped in a fire because they wouldn't know

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how to get to the exits. He also said some vehicles wouldn't be able to use some of the emergency roads in their present condition, and they need to be graded. He suggested posting signs pointing out the exits, and possibly a map at the entrance to the subdivision, with the escape routes marked on it.

Matthews made the point that the county requires public buildings to comply with fire safety precautions, which include providing well-marked emergency exits, and should do the same to protect people at Timber Lakes. For instance, he said, the county wouldn't let anyone build a motel without fire exits.

Coleman said half the people in the Timber Lakes area on weekends are visitors, who would be even less apt to be able to find their way out of the subdivision in an emergency than the homeowners. Sev-

eral people who know the area very well said they wouldn't be able to find their way out of some parts of the subdivision except on the main roads.

Since the matter wasn't on the commission meeting agenda Monday, when the discussion took place, and neither Cummings nor the homeowners were represented, the commissioners said they would put it on next week's agenda. But Dennis Jensen, county natural resources consultant, pointed out that with the vegetation so dry, a fire could break out before then, and emphasized that the problems must be resolved immediately, because people's lives are at stake.

Therefore the commissioners called a meeting for Wednesday morning, at 10:00, with a representative of the Timber Lakes Homeowners Association, Cummings, planning consultants, the fire warden, the sheriff, and the planning department.